

**UCLA Graduate Students Association (GSA)
Forum Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 6, 2002
417 Kerckhoff Hall, 5:00pm**

Members Present: Christine Heiden (A&A), Golnaz Tabibnia (BSC), Grace Chang (BSC), Naser Hamdi (EGSA), Francis Ko (EGSA), Susie Kim (Health Pros.), Pat Goroski (Health Pros.), Jeff Spisak (Hum.), Claire Gallou (Hum.), Toby Bordelon (Law), Diego Arp (Law), Heath Izenson (Management), Jonathan Katz (MPSC), Jerome-Ieronymos-Zoidakis (MPSC), Marie Fox (MPSC), Melinda Kwan (Pub. Health), Francine Redada (SSC), Christine Schwartz (SSC), Deborah La Torre (Ed), Jennifer Bazilius (AIGSA), Michelle Fahley (AIGSA), Kerry Muhlestein (UASRA), Peter Kim (APIGSA), Courtney Johnson (BGSA), Jerry Mann (Admin), Mike Cohn (Admin), Charles Harless (GSA), Dorothy Kim (GSA), Alain Dang (GSA), Mike Moradian (GSA) Sean Banks (Ombuds), Mauricio Ramos (Ombuds), Claudia Mitchell-Kernan (Grad Div.), Jim Turner (Grad Div.).

- The meeting was called to order at 5:06pm. Dorothy noted that because of copy machine problems, there are 2 different agenda packets. One with her attachment (a copy of the Grad Student Support Survey) and one without.

I. Approval of Agendas

A. February 13, 2002 and March 6, 2002

1. Motion to approve - 1: Jerome (MPSC) 2: Diego (Law) passed with unanimous consent.

II. Approval of Minutes

A. January 23, 2002 and February 13, 2002

1. Motion to approve – 1: Jeff Spisak (Hum) 2: Golnaz (BSC) passed with unanimous consent.

III. Old Business

A. Resolutions from last meeting – Funding for publications, Parking, and Budget assumptions.

1. Motion to approve – 1: Naser (EGSA) 2: Diego (Law) passed with unanimous consent.
 - It was clarified that the funding for publications was not an actual resolution, but a motion to close the task force on sexual harassment and reallocate the money. The data will be kept and further suggestions on how to handle it would be accepted.

- At this time in the meeting, guest Claudia Mitchell-Kernan was not in attendance so her report was skipped and the meeting continued with officer reports.

IV. Officer Reports

A. Charles Harless – GSA President

1. GSA Codes: Approval of Changes

- a. Christine asked about the changes. Charles explained that he removed some things that were not applicable, updated definitions of some positions and added appendices into the body of the codes.
- b. Motion to approve – 1: Christine (SSC) 2: Naser (EGSA) passed with one abstention.

B. Alain Dang – GSA EVP

1. Resolution to support SB1412

- a. This was brought up by State Senator Gloria Romero to help increase voter turnout. It strongly recommends that the UC campuses make more visible the voter registration materials. This will be mandated at the Cal State campuses and community colleges, but everyone is trying to work together to support this bill. Kerry asked what other things were on the bill. Alain replied that the language of the bill is in the resolution. Charles asked when the bill will be voted on. It has just gone to the committee and hopefully it will be approved this session. There may be some hang up because it states that any costs spent by the school in promoting voter registration will be reimbursed by the state.
- b. Motion to approve – 1: Naser (EGSA) 2: Kerry (UASRA) passed with unanimous consent.

2. Resolution to support HR786

- a. The Higher Education Act of 1998 stated that students with any drug related offenses would not be eligible for financial aid. The rules are very vague, and it doesn't make any provisions for other crimes. (For example, you could be a rapist and get financial aid but a person caught smoking marijuana would not.) By repealing this it would increase access to education and help improve the future for some people. As it stands, it is double punitive and discriminatory because of the selective enforcement of drug laws. Charles asked who specifically was bringing this resolution to GSA. Alain explained that this was part of a UCSA campaign to divest in the prisons. Kerry asked if this was suggesting a change to the rule or just eliminating it, Alain replied that the bill is to eliminate it.
- b. Motion to approve – 1: Naser (EGSA) 2: Diego (Law) passed with 1 vote against and 2 abstaining.

3. Announcements

- a. The UCSA Women of Color conference is April 5th, 6th and 7th at UCSD. There are opportunities to present workshops and facilitate discussions.
- b. On the table are applications for the system wide academic senate. There are lots of different committees that need grad student representation for things such as grad affairs and library etc. The time commitment varies and Dorothy noted that UCOP pays for your travel expenses as the meetings are all over California. It's a great opportunity to meet people and make your voice heard.

C. Dorothy Kim – VPI

1. Grad Student Support Survey and Report

- a. Dorothy is a grad rep on the Coordinating Committee of Graduate Affairs (CCGA). This is a very interesting report there are lots of good statistics on graduate education. Page 11 is good there are opinions from people who were offered support packages from the UC's. In many areas UC's are below where they should be. The break down by schools is even more interesting. Cost of living is an interesting table, but remember, some of the competition is schools in New York, Boston and Washington D.C. Christine asked who the

report was made for. Dorothy explained that UCOP presents this report to different bodies such as the Chancellors and other legislatures. The goal is to make people aware of the state of grad students support in the UC system.

- V. Grad Division Student Affairs Report – Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, Dean of Grad Division and Vice Chancellor of Graduate Affairs and Interim Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Jim Turner, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Graduate Affairs
- A. Claudia noted that the report that Dorothy had just presented was a collaboration between all of the UC campuses to create a system wide view. Claudia felt that it was important to remember that although UCLA is not competitive nationally in some areas, in others we are ahead. It is also important to remember that the scale is not the same, as we have differences in different areas and aspects.
 - B. They have recently tried to create a model for higher stipends, but it is difficult to accommodate because grad division only supplies 20% of the merit based support. Other revenue streams are TA and GSR-ships (federally funded), federal fellowships, and other private gifts and endowments (which has improved). Keep in mind that UCLA also attracts students who bring money to the school (ie: NSF) but UCLA does differ in its order of magnitude from other campuses such as Berkeley, because of its age and reputation.
 - C. The first priority of Grad Division is increasing grad student support. They are pushing everywhere and things are starting to get to a level of seriousness, which is starting to alarm more important people. UCLA has a policy of stable fees, which means no increase in budget. In the first few years of this policy, the Regents helped cover costs, but they discontinued this year, so there is a \$350,000 gap. Endowments do help, but this is a long-range goal. They have also talked with the different departments and recommended reward increases when recruiting new grad students. The idea is that if the award money is offered in larger chunks as opposed to dissipated into a small amount for everyone, it will make a bigger difference in attracting better grad students.
 - D. Congratulations on the letter that Forum sent on behalf of GSA, it's great to see the support, especially with the housing issue. Claudia expressed that she fully supports all of what GSA stated in the letter.
 - E. One of the aspects UCLA is ahead in is grad student housing. The new housing complex was supposed to break ground for construction this year, but unfortunately there have been some delays because of bidding prices that were higher than expected. The second phase of the housing project may not be started for another 10 years. This is something that Claudia plans on protesting and she hopes that GSA will support her and protest as well.
 - F. In the area of grad student mentoring, this is a very cross-cultural topic, each department is very different from the next. The overall idea however is that mentoring means quality, and it should be focused on in all programs. Claudia's general hypothesis is that more mentoring is highly correlated with a lack of obstacles. When the faculty is not involved, problems arise. GSA can help with this. Providing community space for grad students such as study lounges may help. Phase 2 of the housing plan did include study lounges, but now it is delayed. One idea that has been offered is turning the Bradley International Center into a Graduate Student space. Most of its services are currently aimed towards grad students, although one drawback is that it is far away from the center of campus.
 - G. One service they are trying to extend more to grad students is the Career Center. There have been a few planning and placement workshops and fairs that have been a huge success among grad students, especially for students who are looking for a non-academic career. This also helps bring recruiters to campus to inform grad students about other possibilities and options. Grad division will be looking to collaborate more with the Career Center.
 - H. Jim spoke about how difficult it is to really summarize graduate education into one area and accommodate every department's diverse needs. How do you place an order of value

on different practices in such a diverse system? There is a big difference between what he calls “lone scholars”, typically humanities students who research on their own, and “group departments” such as the sciences, where research is more of a collaborative effort. The fellowships and work differ between departments as well with the sciences generally focusing on lab work while others TA. Grad education is not monolithic, and unfortunately there is not much research on it. A recent issue that came up at a meeting was whether or not the number of papers published by the students was indicative of the quality of education. On this matter, there are completely different viewpoints between departments, some encourage publishing during grad school and others discourage it. The nature of how knowledge is conceived and constructed is very different between the departments. The implications for central administration are not one-size-fits-all policies. IT is modified to be flexible with the different cultures. Consequently, many new interdisciplinary fields have been established in order to take thinking out of the box.

- I. Claudia specified that what they envision is central programs to provide leadership for the campus and bring awareness to many central issues that are relevant to all grad students, such as publishing and career options. With the help of Charles, grad division has made a list of projects that will help connect and be beneficial to all grad students. One of the top priorities is the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities Bill which they are currently working on.
- J. Naser asked about funding for non-resident grad students as their elevated tuition presents a major obstacle in their access to education. There is currently a new measure that the GSR pays for tuition, but this may lead to discrimination in hiring, as it makes non-residents more expensive for departments. Claudia noted that she is more worried about problems concerning students now than about possible problems. She does not believe that this type of discrimination is largely happening on campus, and notes that there has also been an increase in merit based support to help non-resident students. There are many individual decisions that need to be balanced, within departments, and within Grad Division. There are other ways to work with the system and appeal to other funding sources if necessary. They have constructed some perceived possibilities to counteract this such as more fellowships and a reduction of tuition for students who have advanced to candidacy. The non-resident GSR problem most likely only happens during the first year of study and may even motivate students to advance to candidacy faster. International students may pay up to \$50,000 more than residents and domestic students may spend \$10,000, and they are trying to shrink that gap. Jim added that the number of international students and the number of GSRships have both been increasing. Some departments say that they won’t hire international students, but they usually do, things do get paid for. Competing schools can waive tuition and fees, but unfortunately the UC system can’t do that. However, there are many other revenue streams that will hopefully be used to cover more costs in upcoming years.
- K. Naser asked if TA positions could have the same benefits as RA positions. Claudia said that ideally, that would be great, and that is one of their goals.
- L. Both Claudia and Jim are very glad to see so much support from GSA and are looking forward to working together in the future. They are happy that we have such common goals concerning improvements and enhancements to Graduate Education.

VI. Cabinet Reports

A. Mike Moradian – Elections Commissioner

1. The E-Board met and picked a date to hold the elections, which will be April 16-22. Please inform your councils about referendum proposals and officer positions (see attachment E). Jenn asked if the elections will be online again this year and Mike said yes they would. Jonathan asked if the cost of having an online election would be comparable to last year. Mike explained that there would be some updates and new features, so it may end up costing a little bit more.
2. Approval of Elections dates and budget

- a. Motion to approve – 1: Naser (EGSA) 2: Jenn (AIGSA), passed with unanimous consent.

VII. New Business

A. Elections Referendum

1. Officer positions require 50 signatures of enrolled grad students. Referendums to change the GSA constitution need a petition with 500 signatures or Forums approval.
2. Vice President of Academic Affairs
 - a. The first amendment is to elect a Vice President of Academic Affairs. Currently this is a cabinet position, but it is really a lot of work and it should be an officer position. This would have to be an appointed position for next year and then elected by the student body the year after (to avoid a special election). Jenn asked if the officer would replace the cabinet position. Charles explained that it would take over the cabinet position as well as take some other responsibilities that currently the president does. Jenn asked what these jobs were specifically. Charles replied that filling the 25 seats on the academic senate and handling issues between individual students and their departments would be some of the responsibilities. This referendum has been tried before but has not passed because of the lack of 10% voter turnout. Mike M. noted that it would be worded a bit differently on the ballot and Jerry recommended that it be phrased in the same way as the descriptions for the other officers, Charles said that it was.
 - b. Motion to approve – 1: Naser (EGSA) 2: Jeff (Hum.) approved with one abstention.
3. Fee Increase
 - a. At the moment, the GSA membership fees, which all grad students pay with their registration fees each quarter is \$7 (for semester students, the total fees are split in 2 and paid each semester). Of that, \$3 goes to the students individual council, \$.50 goes to UCSA and \$3.50 goes to the GSA Central Office which provides such services as GradBar, Melnitz Movies, Publications Funding and Discretionary Funding. The proposal is to up the fee to \$10 this year with \$4 going to the councils, \$.50 to UCSA and \$5.50 to the Central Office. The referendum also proposes a \$1 increase each year for the next 3 years. Mike C. reminded everyone that the Chancellor must approve of all fee increases and suggested that the wording of the referendum be changed so that it doesn't favor the fee increase, for example, take out the part that says "most councils would be pleased". Charles said that this was the way the fee increase was worded on the ballot last year. Jenn asked what the fee increase was last year. It was \$1.50. Jonathan suggested that the fee increase and the automatic increase be split into 2 referenda. Naser agreed that advocating one may compromise the other. Mike C. argued that usually it is better to consolidate issues in order to keep a shorter ballot. Charles reminded everyone that the central office fees do go directly back to the students in the form of services. Exactly what services are allocated certain amounts of funding is decided upon by Forum when the budget is voted on in the fall. Kerry stated that the wording of the referendum should be changed, even if it was used last year. Naser said

that as rep of a council, he liked the wording. Kerry suggested that it say “This extra funding would be available to councils” (remove the please”. Mike C. suggested that is say something like, “this funding would allow councils...” and list specific benefits, this would be incentive enough. An informal vote was taken to decide this. 10 voted for neutral wording, 4 to keep the wording and 1 abstained. There was another informal vote to accept Mike C.’s wording with 8 in favor and 7 abstaining. It was decided that the wording would be changed to Mike C.’s suggestion. Mike C. said he would notify the chancellor and reminded everyone that if elections do get the 10% voter turnout and a 55% approval rate, the Regents still must approve it over the summer. He also recommended that the ballot measure say that, “this quarterly membership fee increases every year”. Jen recommended that the actual dollar amount for the next 3 years be listed on the ballot.

- b. Motion to approve – 1: Kerry (UASRA) 2: Marie (MPSC) approved with 12 in favor, 2 against and 1 abstaining.

4. Student Interest Groups

- a. Jonathan and Naser brought up this idea after the last Forum meeting. Naser explained that Forum represents grad students and all grad students are supposed to receive equal representation. He does believe that student interest groups are important to Forum, but is worried that if more student interest groups keep applying then they may significantly effect the way votes are cast and perhaps even outnumber the councils. Another problem with this is it may lead to double and even triple representation. Jonathan noted that the student interest groups affect the logistics of quorum. Some are very active, and others are not, it both helps and hurts quorum. Charles explained that the original idea was to remove the student interest groups altogether, but this referendum is a compromise by giving the student interest groups 2 votes collectively. Jenn asked if any groups had applied to be special interest groups after AIGSA did last year. Charles replied that there had been rumblings about it, but nothing official. He also noted that the collective student interest group would be defined in the GSA codes, not the constitution, so it would be easy for Forum to change it (ie: add groups). Jenn reminded everyone that there are 6 student interest groups with 1 vote each, and there are 11 councils with 2-3 votes each, the student interest groups are not going to overshadow the councils any time soon. She also clarified that she represents the American Indian grad students at UCLA, not a department. The needs of departments and the needs of student interest groups are completely different. There are also many differences between the student interest groups and they should not be lumped together. Kerry stated that the measure was too clumsy, and has many logistical problems. For instance, how would the student interest groups meet to decide on issues, especially when sometimes issues (such as this one) are brought up during the meeting, and the students would have no time beforehand to discuss them. Alain was concerned that the diversity in the room might be

compromised as there are no guidelines for diversity, except in the student interest groups. Naser reminded him that the ethnicity of the representatives varies between the councils, and he has not heard of any discrimination in the councils. Diego said that to give people a voice and then to take it away is wrong. The student interest group voice is important especially in matters concerning the UC. The GSA purpose is to gain representation for students. Punishing all of the students because some groups have been apathetic this year is not fair. At least give them the opportunity, and they may or may not take it. Naser suggested that maybe the voting power should depend on the population percentage. Claire asserted that fractional voting would be a bad idea. Jonathan brought up the problem of how to break down the special interest groups, could we end up with the Egyptian, Israeli and Pakistani, amongst many others? Diego reminded him that this resolution is specifically taking away voices, not giving them. Charles, who emphasized his neutral viewpoint pointed out that it does happen that one group takes over the entire student interest group, or the entire council, for example, the Health Professionals Council is dominated by Dentistry and Nursing, Engineering is governed by biomedical engineering students. Courtney said that her big concern was the rationale for this, for changing the dynamics of who has a voice. There should be a better way to give votes without the fear of student interest groups taking over. She also asked why this was important right now. Naser said that he had noticed the number of special interest groups and was worried about his own council. He thinks that the grad student should be able to decide this issue, not the representatives. Mike C. reminded everyone that perception is important. At a time when diverse voices are celebrated within the university, be careful not to look like you are squelching that. He also reminded Forum that it takes their vote to put a referendum for a new student interest group on the ballot. Jenn added that AIGSA had tried 3 times to make their group a special interest group, they had approval by the voters, but twice it could not go into effect because of less than 10% voter turnout. Heath asserted that it is important that people be represented by their interests, although people should have equal representation. As it stands now, an Asian American chemistry student living in grad student housing could be represented by APAGSA, UASRA and MPSC, but someone else may just be represented by MPSC because there is not a special interest group for Caucasians, or Jewish students. Perhaps as an alternate suggestion, students could declare which council they would like to represent them, although this would be an administrative hassle. Jonathan pointed out that this referendum could be empowering, the number of votes could be raised, say to 6. Then perhaps AIGSA would in theory have more votes, depending on how the collective special interest group decided to split them. Jenn pointed out that American Indian studies does not have a department, it kind of gets lost in SSC. Her position on Forum is as an American Indian, not as an anthropology student. Peter said that he appreciates his presence at the table and believes that visibility

is important, it speaks volumes. He is a minority within his school, as many people are. There is always room for more voices. Naser stated that he understands that it is important for underrepresented students to have a voice, it is the number of votes he is worried about. Jennifer motioned to kill the referendum.

- b. Motion to deny – 1: Jenn (AIGSA) 2: Diego (Law) the motion passed with 9 in favor, 4 opposed and 5 abstaining.

B. Sean Banks and Mauricio Ramos – Ombuds

1. Ombuds is an old establishment with a very high reputation. They help with disputes, conflicts and misunderstandings informally and confidentially in regards to the University. Their goal for this year is to be more proactive, especially to grad students. They can be very helpful in controversial issues in dealing with rights and responsibilities, as they practice positive intervention. They do not make decisions, but simply mediate and help solve problems. Jenn asked if they could mediate between a student group and an outside organization, and Sean replied that that would be possible. Jenn also asked if they could help students who were not currently enrolled, as in a leave of absence and were still having problems with the University. Sean said that they are willing to help anyone in the university community having problems with UCLA. They do not represent people, but they help navigate through the bureaucracy. Charles asked if they had any statistics on the number of grad students who have used Ombuds. Sean said that they are currently trying to establish a database. He has definitely seen a need for grad student assistance regarding their rights and responsibilities, but at the moment, it is just anecdotal. They are looking at publishing an end of the year report. There are definitely not as many grads as undergrads, probably because they do not know that the service exists. They are working on publicizing more. They are willing to go to council meetings and give presentations, just give them a call.

VIII. Announcements

- A. GradBar is tomorrow!
- B. There are movie passes on the table as well as information about EC – they need more grads involved.

IX. Meeting adjourned at 7:43

- A. Motion to approve – 1:Jeff (Hum.) 2: Marie (MPSC) passed by unanimous consent.